

B3885



FACT SHEETS FOR PARENTS AND CHILDREN

# Preparing for self-care



**<sup>UW</sup>Extension**

University of Wisconsin-Extension

Faden Fulleylove-Krause, Mary Novak,  
Teri Zuege-Halvorsen, and Faye Malek



B3885



# Preparing for self-care

## FACT SHEETS FOR PARENTS AND CHILDREN

### Introduction

**S**o you are interested in leaving your child home alone?

These materials can assist your family in exploring whether or not a child is ready for self-care. If your child is ready, the materials can help in developing your family's home alone plan.

Five fact sheets address your child's readiness for being home alone. Three are intended for parents, and two are designed for children.

These fact sheets pose many questions for your family to consider as they prepare your child to be home alone. If after answering the questions, you and your child do not feel ready for self-care, it is wise to postpone leaving the child home alone.

When the family feels the child is ready to be home alone, nine fact sheets will guide you in creating your home alone plan.

Remember, every family is unique. There is no magic age when a child develops the maturity and good sense needed to stay alone. There is much to discuss: family rules, home and personal safety, handling emergencies, and what to do with the home alone time.

A family must discuss how to handle and make decisions about its own situation.

We hope these materials will help your family through this important step toward independence for your child.

### Contents

#### Introduction

#### Readiness (for parents)

Is your family ready for self-care?,	1
Is your child ready for self-care?	3
Are your home and neighborhood safe?	5

#### Readiness (for kids)

Kids: Are you ready?	7
Talking it over	9

#### Home alone plan (for parents)

Developing your family's plan	11
Family rules	13
Safety with others	15
Helping children handle emergencies	17
Medical emergencies	19
Structuring time	21
Getting along with others	23

#### Home alone plan (for kids)

How to report an emergency	25
Boredom buster guide	27



An EEO/Affirmative Action employer, University of Wisconsin-Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming, including Title IX and ADA requirements.





READINESS  
FOR PARENTS

# Is your family ready for self-care?

**A**t some point during each child's development, families start to think about letting children supervise themselves. Self-care can be a rewarding experience for children who are ready for it. It can help them develop independence, responsibility, and self-confidence. But if a child is not ready, self-care can be frightening and dangerous.

There is no magic age at which children develop the maturity and good sense needed to stay alone. But there are some signs that show a child may be ready.

## For parents

Three important questions can help parents decide when a child is ready:

- Do you think your child is ready?
- How safe are your house or apartment and neighborhood?
- Does your child think he or she is ready?

You must also ask yourself whether you are ready to take this important step with your child.

## Is your child ready?

Some signs that your child is ready for self-care:

- Your child indicates desire and willingness to stay alone.
- Your child accepts responsibility and makes decisions. For example, your child will follow your written directions for chores that need to be done while you are away.
- Your child shows awareness of what others need.
- For many children, these abilities can appear between 9 and 12 years of age. Other children need more time.







**READINESS**  
FOR PARENTS

# Is your child ready for self-care?



**Can you answer yes to these questions?**

	YES	NO
1. Do you feel your child is mature enough to handle the responsibilities of being alone?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Do you and your child communicate well about feelings?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Can you trust your child to tell you if something goes wrong in self-care?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Does your child follow family rules and directions well?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Is your child resourceful? Is he or she able to find something useful and interesting to do?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Is your child able to solve problems?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Have you talked with your child about self-care? Is he or she interested in trying self-care?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Is your child confident about self-care?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Have you prepared your child and home for self-care?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Can you reach your child by phone and monitor a self-care trial situation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Are you reliable? Do you come home on time? Can you be reached in an emergency?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Is there an adult nearby that can be contacted if there is an emergency (contact person)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you answered mostly yes, you will probably want to read the *Are your home and neighborhood safe?* fact sheet. If you answered mostly no, you may want to store these materials for a later date and continue to provide direct supervision for your child.







**READINESS**  
FOR PARENTS

**How to begin**

Start by leaving your child home alone for short periods of time—only one or two days a week, if possible. Set up a trial period of a week or two to try self-care and see how it works. Then you can talk about how self-care is going and change the arrangement if needed.



# Are your home and neighborhood safe?

**Can you answer yes to all nine questions?**

	YES	NO
1. Are the furnace, fireplace, chimney, and electrical wiring in safe working condition?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Does your home have smoke detectors that work, and do children know what they sound like?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Are firearms locked, and are chemicals, matches, and poisons put away where children cannot get them?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Are children safe when walking home from school alone?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Can you trust the other children and adults in the neighborhood?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Is there a telephone in the home?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Can the doors and windows be locked?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Are the family rules for use of telephone, television, game systems, computer, internet, and having friends over well-known and followed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Does your family have a home alone plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Support options:</b> Are at least two of the following support options available?		
10. The child can call a parent or contact person if needed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Trusted adult friends are nearby to call in an emergency.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Your neighborhood has a Safe Watch or Block Parent program.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you answered yes to all of the first nine questions and at least two support options are available (questions 10-12), you may want to try self-care.





**READINESS  
for kids**

**Think about:**

- What household chores would you do if you were home alone?
- Are any of your friends in self-care?
- What problems do they have?
- What would you do for fun if you were home alone?
- What do your friends like about self-care?

# Kids: Are you ready?

**W**hen your parents agree that you may try self-care, they are showing they think you are growing up and responsible. They probably will want to try self-care for a while to see how you do. By talking with your parents about your feelings, you can help decide whether the time is right for self-care.

**Answer these questions by checking yes or no**

	YES	NO
1. Are you sometimes afraid to be alone in the house during the day?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Are you sometimes afraid to be alone in the house after dark?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Are there activities you would miss if you go home after school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Is there someone in your neighborhood who would make you feel afraid if you were home alone?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Do you have a contact person who can help in an emergency?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Can you do your school work or other activities when home alone?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Do you know the family rules for use of television, game systems, computer, internet, phone, and having friends over?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you answered no to the first four questions and yes to the last three, you are probably ready to start thinking about what it would be like to care for yourself.







READINESS  
for kids

Answer the questions on the right and discuss with parents to see if you feel ready to stay home alone.



# Talking it over

1. When I'm by myself, I feel...

.....  
.....

2. When I'm by myself, I really like to...

.....  
.....

3. When I'm by myself, I really don't like...

.....  
.....

4. When I'm by myself, I get scared about...

.....  
.....

5. When I'm by myself, I wish I knew...

.....  
.....

6. When I'm by myself, I wish I could...

.....  
.....

7. When I'm by myself, the best thing is...

.....  
.....

8. When I'm by myself, the worst thing is...

.....  
.....

**1. When I'm by myself, I feel...**

.....  
.....

**2. When I'm by myself, I really like to...**

.....  
.....

**3. When I'm by myself, I really don't like...**

.....  
.....

**4. When I'm by myself, I get scared about...**

.....  
.....

**5. When I'm by myself, I wish I knew...**

.....  
.....

**6. When I'm by myself, I wish I could...**

.....  
.....

**7. When I'm by myself, the best thing is...**

.....  
.....

**8. When I'm by myself, the worst thing is...**

.....  
.....



## HOME ALONE PLAN FOR PARENTS

# Developing your family's plan

A road map or GPS system are helpful tools to get the family where they need to be when taking a trip. In the same way, developing a home alone plan is an important tool for families preparing for self-care. The children need to know what they can and cannot do. The parents need to know that their children are safe and successfully managing their time when they are home alone. Four important pieces or issues that make up the home alone plan are:

- Following family rules
- Structuring time when home alone
- Handling emergencies
- Dealing with boredom

Families must discuss and decide how they want the children to handle these issues. Each family will be unique.



## Why family rules?

Yes, families do rule, but when children are home alone, knowing the rules or guidelines will help them know what to do and how to feel safe. Getting to "I know how to handle this" takes some work. Start by discussing situations that could happen when children are home alone. Discuss how to handle the situations and come up with family rules or guidelines to help the children understand what to do in these situations. Put these rules on your refrigerator or bulletin board to help everyone remember. If a rule does not work, talk again as a family and change the rule as needed.

Parents can help by using the following guidelines in discussing family rules:

### State the family rules clearly, including the behavior you expect.

"Be good" or "Clean the house" are not clear enough. Be more specific. For example: "No playing outside until your room is picked up." If you define the rule and what behavior you expect, children in self-care follow rules better. They know exactly what to do and when.



## Explain the reason for the rule.

Reasons also help children make wise decisions in new situations. Knowing the reason for a rule increases your child's understanding of the situation. Families need to discuss situations that will happen when the child is home alone and how to handle them. Parents will see how the child thinks in a new situation. Sometimes children do know the best way to handle the situation. Other times, parents need to explain why there is a better way. Each family will have their own rules to follow in their family's home alone plan.

## Clearly state the consequences for not following a rule.

Once a rule is made, discuss the consequences of not following the rule. A child who understands the penalty is more likely to follow the rule. When children are given an opportunity to help establish a consequence, they are more likely to understand and follow the family rule.

## Consistently enforce the rules.

When the rules are enforced consistently, they are more likely to be followed. It can be confusing to children when rules are enforced some of the time but not all of the time. It's better to have a few important rules rather than many inconsistent ones.

When children are home alone, they need to follow the rules that family members identified. Children in self-care who know the rules and can follow them will be able to handle most self-care situations.

## Remember: Rules are followed best when...

- they are stated clearly.
- the children understand the reason for the rules.
- the consequences for not following the rules are understood.
- these consequences are consistently enforced.

## Helpful ideas

### Post the family rules where everyone can see them.

Write down the rules and post them in a place where everyone can see them. Your child can refer to this list as a reminder of agreed rules. Rules can be added to or changed when the family discusses and reviews them. Review the rules weekly to start with and then monthly as the rules become more familiar.

### Children may push against rules as they gain skill and maturity.

As the children grow and become more experienced in their self-care, the rules may need to be changed. Apply the above suggestions as you think about changing a family rule.







**H O M E A L O N E  
P L A N  
F O R P A R E N T S**

**Discuss how your family will handle the following situations. After your family has agreed, write down your answers. Try role-playing each situation, so you will be ready when they arise.**



# Family rules

**Arriving and leaving home**

.....  
.....

**Answering the phone**

.....  
.....

**Answering the door**

.....  
.....

**Using the phone**

.....  
.....

**Use of the TV and game systems**

.....  
.....

**Use of the internet**

.....  
.....

**Use of kitchen equipment and making snacks**

.....  
.....

**Homework**

.....  
.....



## Chores

.....  
.....

## Having friends over to the house

.....  
.....

## Chores and things that need to be done:

If this list is for more than one child, list the task and then the child's name after the task.

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....



## If I am to take messages, I will complete these message memos when someone calls.

**Messages:**  
For: \_\_\_\_\_  
From: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_  
Message: \_\_\_\_\_  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

**Messages:**  
For: \_\_\_\_\_  
From: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_  
Message: \_\_\_\_\_  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....



## HOME ALONE PLAN FOR PARENTS

# Safety with others

**P**rotecting children from sexual abuse and child abduction are very important to each family's home alone plan. Teach your child basic safety rules, but avoid talking about "stranger danger." Research tells us that in most instances a child is well acquainted with the offender. In other words, that person is not a stranger to the child. When we tell a child "never talk to a stranger," we are eliminating a source of help if the child is in trouble.

Instead, speak to your child openly and in a manner that is calm and non-threatening. This approach helps to build the child's confidence to stay safe in a potentially dangerous situation. Remember that fear can be paralyzing to a child.



## General safety guidelines

Here are general safety guidelines to teach children.

- Always check with a parent or trusted adult before going anywhere, accepting anything, or getting into a car.
- Always take a friend when going places or playing outside.
- Say no if someone tries to touch you or treats you in a way that makes you scared, uncomfortable, or confused. Leave the situation.
- Tell a parent or trusted adult if you feel scared or uncomfortable.
- There will always be someone to help you. You have a right to be safe.

Keep in mind that children will benefit from practicing these ideas over time. Look for opportunities to reinforce safety skills such as an incident in the community or the news. Discuss "What would you do if...?" scenarios. Safety skills with positive messages will help keep children safe.



## Safety with others at home

Children often start self-care for short periods after school. This may mean letting themselves into the home. Here are guidelines that many families follow.

### Getting into the home

- Check that the home is locked. If there are open doors or there is broken glass, do not enter. Instead, go to a neighbor's house so an adult can check or call the police.
- If the house looks normal, unlock the door. Take the key out of the door and relock the door from inside.
- Give an extra key to a neighbor, in case you get locked out. Never hide the keys outside. Families in the country with no neighbors may need other plans.

### Answering the door

- Never open the door.
- Ask who is at the door. Look through the viewer if possible. Some families choose not to have children answer the door.
- Never let a visitor know you are alone. Don't give information about family members' schedules. If a visitor asks for help, direct the visitor to an adult.

### Answering the telephone

The telephone represents a lifeline to information, help, and comfort for a child when alone. Children also need to learn how to respond appropriately to callers.

- Begin by saying only "hello."
- Provide no information to the caller. Do not tell anyone you are alone.
- Avoid lying. A statement such as "My father can't come to the phone right now" represents a truthful statement.
- Offer to take a message.
- When faced with persistent questioning, hang up and call a parent or trusted adult.

### Practice with your child

1. Pretend you are a salesperson and want to check a delivery date.
2. Pretend you are a school counselor and want to verify school records.
3. Pretend you are an old friend of the family in town for only a few hours.

When it comes to safety issues, research shows that children learn little from discussions alone, unless practice is included. When children practice these skills, they are much more likely to remember them and really use them when needed.



**H O M E A L O N E  
P L A N  
F O R P A R E N T S**

# Helping children handle emergencies

**W**hen children are home alone, they need to be able to understand what constitutes an emergency. Parents can help children learn about emergencies and good responses to them by having “What would you do if...?” talks. These talks will help children know how the parent wants them to respond. Children are more likely to handle a situation well if they understand the reason for the response.

Be sure your emergency phone numbers are posted by each house phone. (If using a cell phone be sure that emergency numbers are in its phone book.) The child needs to be able to easily find emergency numbers and remain calm while placing the call. A copy of these numbers can be given to the trusted neighbor or contact person.



**Here are seven situations to start your talks. Practice or role-play the child handling these situations. You will want to add more “What would you do if...?” situations that are specific to your family.**

**1. You are making toast. The toast gets stuck and catches on fire. The toaster is near the curtains, and they catch on fire, too.**

Is this an emergency?    Yes    No

What do you do? \_\_\_\_\_

Whom do you call? \_\_\_\_\_

From where? \_\_\_\_\_

**2. You fall against a sharp table corner and get a bad cut on your knee. It is bleeding a lot.**

Is this an emergency?    Yes    No

What do you do? \_\_\_\_\_

Whom do you call? \_\_\_\_\_

From where? \_\_\_\_\_

**3. Your brother falls down the stairs; he does not move or answer when you talk to him.**

Is this an emergency?    Yes    No

What do you do? \_\_\_\_\_

Whom do you call? \_\_\_\_\_

From where? \_\_\_\_\_



**4. You come home after school and see that the front door to your house is open.**

Is this an emergency?    Yes    No

What do you do? \_\_\_\_\_

Whom do you call? \_\_\_\_\_

From where? \_\_\_\_\_

**5. You are putting away the dishes. A glass drops and breaks on the floor.**

Is this an emergency?    Yes    No

What do you do? \_\_\_\_\_

Whom do you call? \_\_\_\_\_

From where? \_\_\_\_\_

**6. A bad storm starts. Suddenly the lights go out.**

Is this an emergency?    Yes    No

What do you do? \_\_\_\_\_

Whom do you call? \_\_\_\_\_

From where? \_\_\_\_\_

**7. The phone rings. When you answer it, someone starts saying bad things.**

Is this an emergency?    Yes    No

What do you do? \_\_\_\_\_

Whom do you call? \_\_\_\_\_

From where? \_\_\_\_\_

**Recommended answers:**

1. **Yes.** Call the fire department or 911 from a neighbor's. (Specify which neighbor.)

2. **Maybe.** Cover with a clean cloth and press firmly. Call a parent or your doctor if the bleeding won't stop. If the cut is gushing blood, call an ambulance or 911 from your home phone.

3. **Yes.** Call an ambulance or 911 from your home phone.

4. **Yes.** Call the police or 911 from a neighbor's house. (Specify which neighbor.)

5. **No.** Put on your shoes and sweep up all the glass; don't pick it up.

6. **No.** Get a flashlight and tune a portable radio to a station that is reporting the weather. Move to a safe place if conditions threaten or you hear a tornado siren. Do not use the phone during an electrical storm (i.e., if there is thunder and lightning).

7. **No...** unless the calls persist. Hang up immediately. If the person calls again, call a parent from your home phone.





## HOME ALONE PLAN FOR PARENTS

### First aid kit:

Families need a first aid kit. Put the kit in a place where it is easy to find, but out of reach of small children.

Items to include:

- Band-Aids™, small and large bandages, and Ace™ bandage
- First aid tape
- Blunt scissors
- Antibiotic ointment
- Antiseptic (rubbing alcohol or hydrogen peroxide)
- Tweezers
- Sterile gauze dressing
- Instant cold pack

# Medical emergencies

## Choking

The universal sign for choking is when someone grabs or touches his or her throat. The person is choking if she or he cannot cough, speak, or breathe. Do the following:

- Act immediately! Always call 911 if you are alone.
- Clear the airway using back blows, then abdominal thrusts (i.e., Heimlich maneuver) so the person can breathe.

### Universal sign for choking



### Back blows



Give five back blows with the heel of your hand directly between the victim's shoulder blades. Place your other arm across his/her chest for balance.

### Abdominal thrusts for a conscious adult



Place one fist just above the person's navel with your thumb against the abdomen. Give five abdominal thrusts. Repeat blows and thrusts as needed.

### Self-administered abdominal thrusts



Place fist above navel while grasping fist with the other hand. Leaning over a chair or countertop, drive your fist towards yourself with an upward thrust.

### When a person is not breathing



Call 911! Administer CPR (rescue breathing and compressions) while the person is lying on her or his back until help arrives.



## Nosebleeds

When someone has a nosebleed she should:

- Sit with her head upright. Lean slightly forward.
- Pinch her nose for 10 minutes.
- If the bleeding does not stop, call for help.

## Bleeding

When someone is bleeding:

- Press a clean cloth against the wound.
- DO NOT wash the cut. Elevate the wound higher than the heart.
- Bleeding cleans the wound and washing may make it bleed more.
- Put a bandage on the wound.
- If the wound is bleeding a lot and can't be stopped, it's serious.
- Call for help.
- Press on the wound with a thick cloth like a towel.
- Keep pressure up and put more clean cloths on top of each other.
- DO NOT take the cloths off the wound.

Apply direct pressure on external wounds with sterile cloth or your hand and maintain pressure until the bleeding stops.



## Burns

- Soak the burn in cold water (not ice).
- If the skin is white, blistered, or broken, it is serious.
  1. Call for help.
  2. Cover the burned area with a clean, dry cloth.
  3. DO NOT take off clothing stuck to the burn.

## Bumps and bruises

- Use ice wrapped in a washcloth, a cold pack, or a bag of frozen vegetables to reduce the inflammation. Hold it on the injured area. If the bump swells or hurts after a while, phone for help.
- Watch out for bumps on the head. If the injured person becomes dizzy, acts strangely, vomits, or blacks out, call for help.

This publication was approved by the Manitowoc-Calumet Chapter of the American Red Cross. The content should not be construed or relied upon as medical diagnoses, instruction, or as an individual course of treatment. For medical advice, consult your doctor.





**H O M E A L O N E  
P L A N  
F O R P A R E N T S**

**A**n important part of each family's home alone plan is how the children will use their time. Their use of time should be good for their development. Children have different needs for privacy, quiet time, and activity time. Children need to play, read, do homework, and talk with other children and adults for healthy development. Be sure to include some household chores. Researchers who followed children into adulthood found that children who are required to do chores tend to do better in life.

# Structuring time

**This tool can help you and your child structure time.**

**What time will the child be home alone?**

From \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

**What activities should they to do during this time?**

**Identify how long these should take and if there is a time by which they need to be finished.**

**Activity**

**Suggestions for use of time**

.....  
.....  
.....

**Notes about my home alone time:**

Tell mom and dad about \_\_\_\_\_

Things I need to know \_\_\_\_\_

Problems I had today \_\_\_\_\_

Today I feel... (Circle all that apply.)

- |       |        |            |       |      |
|-------|--------|------------|-------|------|
| happy | lonely | interested | mad   | sad  |
| upset | scared | excited    | bored | glad |

**Here is a simple tool for your child to use to structure his/her home alone time.**

My home alone activity plan \_\_\_\_\_ day \_\_\_\_\_ date

From \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ I'll \_\_\_\_\_

From \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ I'll \_\_\_\_\_

From \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ I'll \_\_\_\_\_

From \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ I'll \_\_\_\_\_

From \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ I'll \_\_\_\_\_

From \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ I'll \_\_\_\_\_



## Media as a home alone activity

In a national education study, students reported spending four times as many hours watching television each week as doing homework. Children who are heavy TV viewers (more than three hours a day) show the greatest decline in reading ability. Another study found that TV on in the background during homework time interfered with the retention of skills and information. These studies show a need for families to have a discussion about the use of TV and computer games during their home alone time.

## Parents need to...

- set a good example with their own TV habits.
- keep the TV in a public part of the home. Monitor violence and sexual content.
- protect family time. Turn TV off during family meals and if no one is watching.
- set and enforce rules for TV and computer. Explain why the rules are important.
- watch TV as a family and talk about what you see, including commercials.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children be allowed no more than two hours of television per day.





## HOME ALONE PLAN FOR PARENTS

# Getting along with others

**C**onflict with siblings and friends is a normal part of development. During the middle years, most children tend to see things in “black and white,” thinking themselves right and the other person wrong. They find it hard to understand that most conflicts arise from different points of view. Not until adolescence do most children fully appreciate that the best solutions are ones where both people agree.

Some conflict can be beneficial to children’s development. Through disputes, children become more aware of the needs and rights of others. They learn to assert themselves, develop problem-solving skills, and gain independence.



## Guidelines to help children get along with others

- Set clear family rules.
- Give each child plenty of individual attention to lessen competition.
- Help children develop good communication skills. Encourage them to listen well and share feelings with others in a respectful way.
- Teach children a variety of acceptable ways to resolve conflict. Some examples are taking turns, splitting the difference, or making a deal.
- Let children solve some problems on their own, if they can do so safely.
- Practice working through conflict situations with children. In situations where children constantly argue, work out advance plans to prevent conflict.
- Try to plan some separate activities for each child to reduce time together.

It may take some time for your children to use new ways to resolve problems, but have patience and continue to encourage them. Sibling conflict can be an opportunity to teach children how to get along with others who are different from them.



## Think up solutions

Read through each of the following situations. Then think of as many solutions as you can. Write down the solutions, and discuss each one. Which solution would most likely end the disagreement?

### Situations

1. You are watching your favorite TV program. Your sister comes in, takes the remote, and changes the channel.
2. You and your brother usually take turns taking out the garbage. You think it is his turn to take it out, but he says it is your turn.
3. Your sister hits you because you didn't do what she wants you to do.
4. Your family had chocolate cake for dessert last night. You saved your piece for a snack after school. But when you look for it, you find your stepbrother ate it.

## Practice with your child

Identify situations where your children had disagreements. Guide them in creating solutions to the problems. Remind children that it is easier to find solutions when they approach others in a respectful manner. They are learning important skills that will last a lifetime.

As children learn how to work through their differences respectfully, they usually have fewer conflicts. That makes it easier to naturally develop feelings of friendship.



**H O M E A L O N E**  
**P L A N**  
**for kids**

# How to report an emergency

**1. Call 911 and briefly state the problem.**

**Example:** "My sister fell down the stairs and does not move or answer when I talk to her."

**2. Give your full name, address, phone number, fire number, and nearest intersection.**

**3. Wait for questions or instructions. Stay on the phone until told to hang up and follow instructions.**

## Fire

**Children should not try to put out a fire. If a fire starts, get everyone out of the house. Call 911 from a neighbor's house. Contact the fire department for further information.**

## Did you know?

Many areas use the enhanced 911 emergency response system which displays the caller's address. However, not all areas use this system, so be sure you know your address and fire number. In addition, when 911 calls are placed from an older cell phone lacking GPS tracking, the response system will not recognize the location.

## Practice.

Pretend placing a 911 call, following the directions stated above.







**H O M E A L O N E**  
**P L A N**  
**for kids**  
**& P A R E N T S**

**I**f you have a plan to prevent boredom, your children's experience of being home alone will go smoother, and they will become more self-reliant. In addition, developing a plan for spending home alone time teaches them to plan future activities.

# Boredom buster guide

## Preparing for self-care

**W**hen children are learning to stay home alone, it is important to have a plan in place for when boredom strikes. A plan increases confidence levels in children so they feel in control of their situation, and it reduces stress for both children and parents. Use the following ideas to develop your own guide.

### Activities

Review ideas for acceptable activities together using sources from magazines, books, internet, library, and school. Here are a few examples to get you started:

### Magazines

- FamilyFun
- Cricket
- Parent & Child
- Ask
- Jack & Jill
- Highlights
- Odyssey

### Books

*365 Activities for Fitness, Food, and Fun for the Whole Family* by Julia Sweet

*365 Unplugged Family Fun Activities: A Year's Worth of Ideas for TV-Free, Video-Free, and Computer Game-Free Entertainment* by Steven J. Bennett and Ruth Bennett

*Weekends with the Kids: Activities, Crafts, Recipes, and Hundreds of Ideas for Family Fun* by Sara Perry and Quentin Bacon

*The Golden Book of Family Fun* by Peggy Brown







## Unplugged or offline games and activities

Here are some examples of age-appropriate games, arts, crafts, and activities. Decide which ones are suitable for your children. Determine how long the children can do the activity, where the activity should take place, the clean-up process, and the schedule.

### General interest

- Chutes and Ladders©
- Connect Four©
- Don't Break the Ice©
- Don't Spill the Beans©
- Hi Ho Cherry-O©
- Perfection©
- Twister©
- Memory Game©
- Trouble©
- Operation©

### 8 years and older

- Aggravation©
- Battleship©
- Boggle©
- Clue©
- Jenga©
- Monopoly©
- Paper football
- Pictionary©
- Scrabble©
- Taboo for Kids©
- Thumb wrestling
- Tripoley©
- Trivial Pursuit Junior©
- Uno©
- Yahtzee©

### One person games and activities

- Spider solitaire and solitaire
- 100- to 1000-piece puzzles
- K'Nex© Pieces
- Legos© set
- Simon
- Journaling, poetry or story writing
- Origami paper art





## Arts and crafts

Some of the following activities can be prepared as a family ahead of time. Children can use them while they are home alone.

### Sock and toss game

- Two large pieces of cardboard or wood (at least 18 x 24 inches)
- String or locking plastic ties
- Scissors and masking tape
- Unmatched socks
- Dried beans, lentils, or rice
- Permanent black marker or paint with brush

Draw five circles on the front of one of the boards. Space them as equally apart as possible. Cut out the circles. Near each of the circles, draw or paint point values and let dry. Next, cut three small holes at the top of the two large pieces of wood or cardboard. Tie both pieces of wood or cardboard together using the string or ties. Once they are tied together pull the boards slightly apart and stand it up on the floor so it is like a sandwich board. Now make the bean bags. Fill an old, holeless sock with about 1 cup of dry beans, lentils, or rice. Tie the end of the sock shut and tighten as much as possible. Cut off excess material. With a piece of tape mark a spot on the floor where players will stand to throw the sock bean bags through the holes in the board. Play this game individually or with others.

## Recycled art

- poster paper or tag board
- glue sticks or liquid glue
- old magazines, cards, or pictures
- safe scissors
- glitter pens or fun markers
- string

The object of this activity is to create art out of everyday items. Go through the pile of magazines, pictures, and cards to pick and cut out favorite pictures. Glue the choices to the poster paper in any configuration. It provides instant art for the bedroom!

## Natural artwork

Collecting outdoor materials is a fun and enjoyable activity. For example, during the summer collect beautiful flowers or in the fall collect leaves at the peak of their color. Press leaves or flowers in a large book for drying so they will retain their shape and still be usable. You can collect rocks, seashells, or wood from places you have visited.

Natural artwork can be displayed in different ways depending upon what was collected. Rocks, sand, seashells and other outdoor things can be displayed beautifully in any type of glass container with a lid. Decorate the lid with paint, string, buttons, or other things glued to it. Leaves and flowers can be displayed in plastic document protectors, wax papers that have the materials ironed between them, or between two pieces of clear contact paper. Let your imagination run completely wild with this one!

## Homemade play dough

- 3 cups flour
- 1 cup salt
- 2 T. warm water
- 1½ cup vegetable oil
- drops food coloring

Put 3 cups flour, 1 cup salt, 2 tablespoons of warm water and 1½ cups of vegetable oil into a large bowl. Knead all ingredients together and form into balls (this is a great sensory development skill for younger children). Then, gently work in a few drops of food coloring to create colored play dough. You can mix colors together to teach children about using primary colors to create secondary colors. When you are done playing, store the play dough in an airtight container for another day.

## Oobleck

- 1 cup water
  - 1½–2 cups corn starch
  - a few drops of food coloring (optional)
- Put the water in a bowl and add the corn starch gradually. Use a spoon at first, but pretty quickly you will need to use your hand to stir. Mix slowly with your hand, allowing the Oobleck to remain in a liquid state. If you put a lot of pressure on the Oobleck it will turn into a solid.



## When hunger hits

Sometimes boredom and hunger happen at the same time, so it is a good idea to have healthy snack ideas already in mind. It is also very important for safety; your children need to know which appliances are acceptable to use. Here are some easy, healthy snack ideas that require little or no cooking. Be sure to have all ingredients on hand for the agreed upon snacks.

### Plain peanut butter balls

- 1/2 cup peanut butter
- 1/2 cup honey or powdered sugar
- 1 cup graham cracker crumbs
- 2 tablespoons powdered milk

Mix all ingredients until well blended. Roll into balls. Refrigerate to set. Add coconut, chocolate chips, or cereal to change the texture and flavor. Just use 1/4 cup of the ingredient and reduce the amount of graham cracker crumbs.

### Waffle snack sandwich

- two frozen waffles (toasted)
- peanut butter or other nut butter
- jelly or jam

Make just like a regular peanut butter sandwich.

### Frozen fruit kabobs

- Use any washed fruits, such as strawberries, grapes, oranges, bananas, or melon.
- Cut fruits into chunks or into separate pieces. Place on toothpicks.
- You can roll or coat fruits in powdered sugar, honey, toasted wheat germ, shredded coconut, or chocolate syrup.
- Place on wax paper and cover. Freeze.

### Fresh fruit smoothies

Blend all the listed ingredients for one or two minutes. This snack requires a kitchen appliance, so it should be reserved for older children or prepared ahead of time.

#### Funky peanut butter monkey

- 1 banana
- 1/2 cup vanilla yogurt
- dash of milk
- 1 Tbsp. peanut butter
- 1/2 cup ice

#### Peach fizzy

- 1 whole fresh peach without pit or skin or 1 whole canned peach
- 1/4 cup orange juice
- 1/3 cup club soda
- 1/2 cup ice

#### Double berry blast

- 1 cup strawberries
- 1/2 cup raspberries
- 1/4 cup of milk
- 1 cup ice

#### Strawberry orange slush

- 1 cup strawberries
- 3/4 cup orange juice
- 1 tsp. lemon juice
- 1 cup ice

#### Dual orange

- 1/2 cup vanilla yogurt
- 1/2 cup mandarin oranges
- 1/2 cup orange juice
- 1 cup ice

### Apple smiles

- apples
- peanut butter or cream cheese
- raisins

Cut the apples into wedges and spread peanut butter or cream cheese on them. Add a few raisins for flavor. Enjoy!

### Wrap sandwiches

- whole wheat flour tortillas
- cream cheese, peanut butter, or cheese spread
- deli-sliced ham, chicken, or turkey
- raisins, grated carrots, or banana

Spread cream cheese, peanut butter, or cheese spread onto tortilla. Place one or two slices of ham, chicken, or turkey over the cream cheese or cheese spread. Or, use raisins, grated carrots, or apple or banana slices with peanut butter. Roll tightly and cut into small rounds. These are fun to eat with a toothpick!







**Copyright © 2009** by the Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System doing business as the division of Cooperative Extension of the University of Wisconsin-Extension. All rights reserved. Send copyright inquiries to: Cooperative Extension Publishing, 432 N. Lake St., Rm. 227, Madison, WI 53706, pubs@uwex.edu.

**Authors:** Faden Fulleylove-Krause, Emeritus Professor, Department of Family Development; Mary Novak, Professor, Department of Family Development and Family Living Educator, UW-Extension, Cooperative Extension; Teri Zuege-Halvorsen, Instructor, Department of Family Development and Family Living Educator, UW-Extension, Cooperative Extension; and Faye Malek, Associate Professor, Department of Family Development and Family Living Educator UW-Extension, Cooperative Extension. Cooperative Extension publications are subject to peer review.

**University of Wisconsin-Extension, Cooperative Extension**, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Wisconsin counties, publishes this information to further the purpose of the May 8 and June 30, 1914, Acts of Congress. An EEO/AA employer, the University of Wisconsin-Extension, Cooperative Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming, including Title IX and ADA requirements. If you need this information in an alternative format, contact Equal Opportunity and Diversity Programs, University of Wisconsin-Extension, 432 N. Lake St., Rm. 501, Madison, WI 53706, diversity@uwex.edu, phone: (608) 262-0277, fax: (608) 262-8404, TTY: 711 Wisconsin Relay.

**This publication is available** from your county UW-Extension office ([www.uwex.edu/ces/cty](http://www.uwex.edu/ces/cty)) or from Cooperative Extension Publishing. To order, call toll-free: 1-877-947-7827 (WIS-PUBS) or visit our website: [learningstore.uwex.edu](http://learningstore.uwex.edu).

**Home Alone: Preparing for Self-Care (B3885)**

I-10-2009